

**Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board**  
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 at 1pm**  
**The Argyll Hotel, Inveraray**

**Present**

Roger Brook (Chair) (Awe) **RB**  
Rosie Campbell-Preston (Awe) **RCP**  
David Stewart (Creran) **DS**  
Stephen Gibbs (Arran) **SG**  
Caroline Fleming (Arran)  
Andrew Barker (Ruel) **AB**  
Elaine Jamieson (Forestry Commission) **EJ**  
Russell Buchanan (DDAC) **RBu**  
Bill Duff (DDAC) **BD**  
David Lilley (DDAC)  
Jimmy Middleton (Tenant netsmen's rep)  
Jane Wright

Jeremy Hall-Smith **JHS**  
Patti Hall-Smith  
Craig MacIntyre (Clerk/AFT) **CM**  
Alan Kettle-White (AFT) **AKW**  
Helen MacIntyre (Administrator)

**Apologies**

Stephen Austin (SNH)  
Katie McGregor  
Tony Huntington  
David Sumsion  
Sir Islay Campbell

- 1) **Apologies.** The Chairman, Roger Brook, welcomed everyone to the meeting, with a special welcome for Rosie Campbell-Preston from the Awe District River Improvement Association and Elaine Jamieson from the Forestry Commission. Apologies were read out for those listed above.
- 2) **Minutes of the meeting of October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013.** A motion that the minutes be accepted was proposed by David Stewart, seconded by Jane Wright, and agreed by all.
- 3) **Declaration of Members' Interests.** It was asked if any member has any interests to declare. None were declared. RB stated that it is assumed that if any conflict of interests arose in the future then members would declare them at the time and be excluded from any decisions regarding those interests.
- 4) **Matters arising.** River Improvement Associations (RIAs) were notified at the meeting in October 2013 that they should be careful to act as consultative bodies and not take on any duties of the Board. They should also notify the Board of their meetings so that the Clerk can attend. Most RIAs have done this, with the exceptions of the Nell & Euchar RIA and the Add RIA. These RIAs will not receive any money due to them until the Board is satisfied as to their activities and made aware of their meetings.
- 5) **Report from DSFB Executive Committee.** The committee have been meeting along with the Argyll Fisheries Trust executive committee but there are no actions to report.
- 6) **Finance & Clerk's Annual Report.**
  - a. 2013 Activities: There was a surplus of £3920, which will be used for fishery protection and enhancement activities, to be decided by the executive committee. Assets currently stand at £21,600. Any funds being held that would have been given to an RIA will be ring fenced and the money used in that area only. Approval of the accounts was proposed by Stephen Gibbs and seconded by Jane Wright, and approved by all. 2013 catch returns showed a 30% drop in salmon and 40% drop in sea trout caught, which was a similar trend in the rest of Scotland. Catch and release policies have been followed in most places, with the exception of the Kintyre district. The Board received many consultations for aquaculture, wind farm, and hydro electric developments. You can find information about these on our website (<http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk>). The DSFB received two complaints from proprietors who did not want to pay their levies. However, they are required to pay by law.
  - b. Planned 2014 Activities: There will be work on the River Awe to improve Salmon Cruive. More treatment of Japanese knotweed will take place. The issue of salmon stocking in Argyll rivers will be addressed, with regard to reasons for stocking.

JHS asked how accurate is salmon catch reporting. RB said Marine Scotland assume it is consistent but not necessarily accurate; however we assume it is not only not accurate but also not consistent due to an increase in catch and release fishing resulting in reporting of fewer salmon caught.

EJ asked if new forestry plans meet with the Board's approval with regard to wild fish populations. CM answered that some new plans are great, such as for Glen Creran, but in some cases we still see forestry planted right up to a river, which is bad for wild fish. RB added that road construction for forestry can have an impact and sometimes contractors don't follow the rules. AKW explained that culverts can be difficult for fish to pass at certain flow levels, and Argyll Fisheries Trust will be running a workshop later in the year about this. CM added that a very poor culvert went in on the Ruel a few weeks ago and has caused problems. RBu asked who should we approach with forestry complaints. EJ stated that she is keen to understand current issues and that any complaints about forestry commission land should go straight to Lochgilphead Forestry Commission rather than the contractors.

David Stewart proposed that the Annual Report is approved, seconded by Russell Buchanan, and agreed by all.

- 7) **Wild Fisheries Review.** The Government is reviewing the management of all wild fisheries in Scotland. Andrew Thin (previously SNH) has been employed to run the Commission and to report to the Government in October. The aim is to bring all fisheries and all waters in to management, and representation will be less dominated by proprietors in the future. The intent is for all this to go through in a Bill before the next government election. CM and RB met with Andrew Thin and the likelihood is that Salmon Fishery Boards will cease to exist, replaced by a central national body with a few regional bodies, maybe only two or three. The question is how it will be funded since currently only salmon is managed because it is funded. CM and RB suggested some methods to Andrew Thin. One possibility is a rod licence, but this may not be politically acceptable. RB feels that from Argyll's point of view the management of all waters by one body is a necessary. For example, currently Loch Awe is managed separately from Rivers Awe and Orchy, despite the water running from the River Orchy into Loch Awe and then into River Awe, which is a nonsense. RB pointed out that the outcome of the Scottish independence vote will have an impact on how much time is spent on this review.

SG asked if RB will meet with Andrew Thin again, and if he can add anything to help. RB said they are working on a levy on incomes from lettings, but this would mean a lot of bureaucracy as all fishery owners would have to declare all incomes. BD asked if the review is financially driven, but RB said the Government have said they are not putting in a penny so it has to pay for itself. RBu asked if fish farms will pay levies, but RB confirmed that fish farms are not involved in this review but netting stations are. AKW pointed out that permitting on fishing effort would give us more information about catch and effort, and this is desirable from a management point of view. RB agreed that future management would require to be evidence-based and this could only be a good thing for fishery trusts, providing work for them. RB said that currently in Argyll, if you remove the income for the largest rivers you are left with just £44 per year for the management of the rest! You can't even drive to those rivers with that money. AKW pointed out that we are driven to get funding for what we can, so money drives what work is done, not the other way round.

- 8) **Small Rivers Committee.** DS described how the small rivers committee, a sub-committee of the ADSFB, had been given suggestions by the Argyll Fisheries Trust of four options for dealing with small rivers in Argyll – whether they are really fisheries and if they should be charged a levy. The committee had discussed the four options and thought that all had some disadvantages. They decided that the Wild Fisheries Review was likely to affect anything that they decided on, so they will wait until October to decide on any further strategies for small rivers. RB thanked the committee for meeting and suggested that they should look at the issue again in October if the fisheries review doesn't solve the problem. RB said he frequently points out to the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards that we are not a small board, we are a poor board, since we have lots of rivers but few fish to raise money for management.
- 9) **Argyll Fisheries Trust presentation.** AKW gave a presentation on what the Trust have been doing and their plans for the coming year. Information about this can be found on their website [www.argyllfisheriestrust.co.uk](http://www.argyllfisheriestrust.co.uk). RB said that the Trust have improved over the last decade so they are now considered amongst the best trusts in the whole of Scotland, and are now running national projects. AKW is also on the UK Wild Trout Trust board due to his expertise as a fisheries biologist. The Trust should be congratulated for these achievements. All agreed.

10) **Stocking.** The River And Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) developed a policy on salmon stocking, which has a presumption against stocking to enhance a fishery (the other types of salmon stocking are to mitigate against something, or to restore a population). Argyll Fisheries Trust were contracted by RAFTS to write the technical report on the stocking of salmon in rivers. AKW prepared the report on stocking, which concluded that it negatively affects the genetic fitness of salmon populations. Stocking has been shown to be ineffective and often harmful. It should not be used to increase numbers of salmon in a river unless for restoration of a population that is down to the last few individual salmon. Enhancement purely to increase catch numbers is not recommended as the fish reared in tanks to be reintroduced will be better adapted to surviving in an artificial not natural environment and will have a narrower genetic spread than those produced in the wild. Having good genetic fitness in a salmon population will enable it to better adapt to changes in its environment due to climate change.

RCP suggested we could look at anecdotal evidence of fish introduced into the River Awe historically. AKW said they have looked at fish genetics from the River Shin to see if any from there have survived in the Awe, but no genetic links have been found so it is likely the genes have been weeded out as the local fish will have been better adapted to that river. RBU suggested that we need to protect the salmon feeding grounds at sea rather than producing more young fish in hatcheries. AB asked how many hatcheries are operating now in Argyll. AKW said not many, and that most are as short term intervention for restoration purposes, with just one hatchery used purely for enhancement of numbers. RB said the Board cannot justify authorising hatcheries that are just for enhancement, and we should encourage them to close. The new review is likely to recommend this anyway. In Wales they are not allowing any more hatcheries to be set up. There is plenty of habitat enhancement we can do to improve populations, and also continue the fight with aquaculture. AKW pointed out that hatcheries should not be used to mitigate losses of salmon at sea – we need to be concerned with the quality of fish that go to sea rather than the quantity. CM said that if we are regulating hatcheries we also need to monitor them. RB said they did this on the River Spey and found that the broodstock taken for the hatchery would have benefited the river more if they had just been left in the river. They have scaled back the hatchery but local opposition has made it difficult to close, since there is a general belief that hatcheries are good. AKW pointed out that on a large East Coast river a hatchery would have a smaller effect than on a West Coast river where it might increase catches but would be more harmful on a genetic level. RCP asked how low do you let a population go before you intervene. AKW said there were probably only a dozen fish left in the Fyne before they intervened with a hatchery, using it to buy time whilst they improved the habitat and moved the fish farm, but it is a risk you take by removing some fish for broodstock instead of leaving them in the river. They have now stopped stocking the Fyne as it is showing signs of recovery. Some fish from the Fyne have also been used for stocking the Kinglas.

11) **ASFB/RAFTS report.** Given by Roger Brook.

**Managing Interactions Aquaculture Project (MIAP)** – There has been no commitment from the Government for further funding yet. An update to the map is due out this week. The Government wants RAFTS to co-operate with fish farms on information for the map, which would give another layer of detail to it.

**Netting** – The Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland have decided to start netting in the first six weeks of the salmon season. We believe they are doing this because they want to net into September and will try to use this as a bargaining tool. This has not gone down well.

**Finance for Trusts** – There will be a crisis in cash flow as work for Trusts used to be paid in advance of the work being done, but there is a switch to paying after the work is done. This will be a big problem for the Argyll Fisheries Trust and also for RAFTS.

12) **Date of next meeting** – Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 has been proposed.